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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on technical assistance provided to 21 exemplary Title I projects participating in a special dissemination strategy to improve educational services for disadvantaged students. The dissemination strategy is outlined, and descriptions are given of the participating projects. The types of technical assistance and support services, and the ways in which they were delivered by the Support System are analyzed. Also discussed are variations in the services provided, factors which influenced the delivery and use of the assistance, and the effects of these services on the 21 projects. Conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the project are drawn, and recommendations are made for continuing and improving the delivery of technical assistance. (EB)

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PREPARING FOR DISSEMINATION

A Study of

Technical Assistance for

Developer-Demonstrator

projects in the NDN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In November, 1977 The NETWORK was awarded a contract by the U. S. Office of Education to implement a technical assistance project known as the Title I Support System. The Support System provided services and support to 21 exemplary Title I projects participating in a special dissemination strategy jointly sponsored by three USOE agencies: the Division of Educational Replication (National Diffusion Network); the Division of Education for the Disadvantaged (Title I) and the Office of Planning, Budgeting, and Evaluation (OPBE), now the Office of Evaluation and Dissemination. The purpose of the special dissemination strategy was to focus on the adoption of exemplary Title I projects by local Title I schools and districts around the country.

In addition to providing technical assistance services through the Title I Support System, The NETWORK's contract with USOE also called for a study of the Support System's operation. In requesting the study USOE was hoping to learn more about the kinds of needs projects have when undertaking a national dissemination effort and about the ways in which technical assistance can address those needs.

A SUMMARY OF THE TITLE I/NDN DISSEMINATION STRATEGY AND A DESCRIPTION OF THE 21 TITLE I D/D PROJECTS

As noted, the Title I/NDN dissemination strategy directed at improving educational services for disadvantaged students was collaboratively developed by several agencies within USOE. The strategy was intended to address multiple goals some of which were held by all the sponsors and some of which were particular to certain agencies. The five primary goals of the effort were:

1. To achieve 300 adoptions of the 21 Title I projects in 45 states during the 77-78 school year.

2. To foster increased collaboration between the State Title 1 and Migrant Education Coordinators and the NDN State Facilitators
3. To demonstrate the capability of the National Diffusion Network to target dissemination activities on specific populations
4. To help expand the emphasis of the Title I program beyond monitoring compliance to substantive program improvement via dissemination
5. To support more widespread adoption of Project Information Packages (PIPs)

The vehicle for implementing the Title I/NDN dissemination strategy was a series of five regional awareness conferences designed to bring personnel from Title I schools and districts across the country in direct contact with the staff of the 21 exemplary projects. The conferences ran from November 1977 - January 1978 and involved four sets of actors in their implementation: the 21 exemplary projects; USOE personnel from the sponsoring agencies; NDN State Facilitators and SEA coordinators for Title I and Migrant Education; and four agencies contracted to provide technical assistance to some of the projects and to coordinate the five regional conferences.

The most significant group of people involved in the Title I dissemination strategy were the projects themselves. They had in common the fact that each had been designed to serve educationally disadvantaged and that each had been reviewed and approved both by Title I (for compliance with Federal guidelines) and by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel (for dissemination by USOE). Beyond these characteristics, however, there are a great variance among the projects on several dimensions. The Table on the next page compares the 21 projects on several dimensions that were studied in relationship to technical assistance provided

OVERVIEW OF THE TITLE I SUPPORT SYSTEM

The technical assistance provided to the 21 projects by the Support System was characterized as highly proactive, personalized and flexible

A Comparison of the 21 D/D Projects Along Seven Dimensions

PROJECTS	SHORT TITLE FOR REFERENCE	EXPERIENCE OF DISSEMINATION COORDINATOR	TIME COMMITMENT OF DISSEMINATION COORDINATOR	SOURCE OF DISSEMINATION FUNDS	PROGRAM TYPE	DATE ENTERED IN "EPTW" (1)	IN OR OUT OF NETWORK'S TIME ZONE	LEVEL OF DISSEMINATION FUNDING (2)
Project Catch-Up	Catch Up	Veteran	Part-time	NDN	PIP-1	1975	Out	1
Catch Up - Keep Up	CU-KU	Novice	Full-time	OPBE	PIP-2	1976	Out	2
Project CHILD	CHILD	Veteran	Part-time	Non-Funded	Migrant	1976	In	0
Conquest	Conquest	Veteran	Part-time	OPBE	PIP-1	1975	Out	2
Discovery Through Reading	Discovery	Veteran	Full-time	NDN	PIP-2	1976	In	1
Early Prevention of School Failure	EPSF	Veteran	Full-time	NDN	Other	1975	Out	2
Flagstaff Remedial Reading Project	Flagstaff	Novice	Full-time	OPBE	PIP-2	1976	Out	2
Florida Migratory Compensatory Program	Florida	Novice	Part-time	Non-Funded	Migrant	1976	In	0
High Intensity Tutoring (HIT)	HIT	Novice	Part-time	OPBE	PIP-1	1975	In	2
HOSTS	HOSTS	Veteran	Full-time	NDN	Other	1975	Out	2
Improvement of Basic Reading Skills	IBRS	Novice	Full-time	OPBE	PIP-2	1976	Out	2
Intensive Reading Instructional Teams	IRIT	Novice	Full-time	OPBE	PIP-1	1975	In	2
Project NOMAD	NOMAD	Veteran	Part-time	Non-Funded	Migrant	1976	In	0
Pre-Kindergarten for the Disadvantaged (Predict I)	Predict	Novice	Part-time	NDN	Other	1977	Out	1
Programmed Tutorial Reading	PTR	Novice	Part-time	OPBE	PIP-1	1975	Out	2
Reading/English Rotation Project	RER	Novice	Part-time	NDN	Other	1977 (3)	In	1
Project Reading Improvement	PRI	Novice	Part-time	NDN	PIP-2	1976	In	1
Project Seaport	Seaport	Novice	Part-time	OPBE	PIP-2	1976	In	2
Secondary Credit Exchange Program	Sec.Credit	Veteran	Part-time	Non-Funded	Migrant	1977	Out	0
Title I Reading Center	Title I RC	Veteran	Part-time	NDN	Other	1976	In	1
Training Migrant Paraprofessionals (Individualized Bilingual Instruction)	IBI	Novice	Part-time	NDN	Migrant	1976	Out	1

Notes: (1) "EPTW" - Educational Programs That Work, USOE's catalog of JDRP-approved projects

(2) Funding level key: 0 = non-funded; 1 = $38,000 or below; 2 = $50,000 or above

(3) Although RER was listed in EPTW in 1976, description explicitly stated that no dissemination services were available.

in its approach. The project operated with a single full-time Project Director who functioned both as the technical assistance contact person for all 21 clients and as the manager of all services provided by the Support System. Consultants (from within and outside The NETWORK) were called upon to provide some services to the client projects; many services were provided directly by the Support System Project Director.

Technical assistance was available in several different forms or modes. Individual project consultation was offered via telephone or in-person at the project's site or at conferences and workshops. The Support System also offered information and resource services in response to individual project needs. During the early weeks of the Title I dissemination strategy the Support System also managed the production of awareness materials by local media and materials specialists for some of the projects. Group administered assistance was provided in the form of resource packages, technical assistance workshops, and regular news bulletins produced by the Support System for all 21 clients. A significant aspect of all group administered technical assistance services was an emphasis on networking or linking the client projects with one another in order to facilitate their sharing of resources and support.

Underlying the Support System's design of centrally-managed delivery of technical assistance in several forms were four assumptions about the nature of technical assistance. These four assumptions, derived from The NETWORK's experience in providing technical assistance and in part from the experience of other technical assistance agencies (as described in current literature) are listed below.

Assumption 1: Technical assistance is an intentional activity. This means that the technical assistance agency should take the initiative to discern the clients' needs and provide services required, as opposed to existing as a resource for the clients to access only at their own initiation.

Assumption 2: Technical assistance is, at bottom, a helping activity that requires a building of trust, mutual respect, and credibility between client and helper. This means that a technical assistance agency should take responsibility for developing relationships with the clients it seeks to serve.

Assumption 3: The design and delivery of technical assistance services are most profoundly influenced by the goals that the clients must achieve, and the political and logistical features of the context within which the clients must operate. This means that the technical assistance agency must have ways of determining what the clients' goals are and what the contextual factors are that may influence the achievement of the goals.

Assumption 4: A technical assistance system should function as a network within which members initiate and maintain communication around specific problems and about strategies to solve the problems. This means that the technical assistance agency should direct attention toward helping the clients realize their potential for learning from and helping one another.

Operating on these four assumptions about technical assistance, the Title I Support System approach was characterized by strategies directed at proactive involvement with the clients, an emphasis on defining the clients' tasks and operating context, and the development of personalized relationships with and among the clients.

STUDY METHODS

To provide a focus for the study five questions were developed around which data was collected and analyzed. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered by the study staff. Much of the information used by the study came from the documentation system maintained by the technical assistance staff. Such documentation included detailed descriptions of all technical assistance transactions, telephone and technical assistance logs, and assessment and planning materials completed by the client projects. Other data sources included notes from field observation, and interviews with clients and technical assistance staff conducted by a research associate assigned to the study effort.

Data analysis procedures involved the compilation of descriptive statistics -- frequency counts and averages -- for various amounts, modes, and content of technical assistance transactions, as well as the identification description of trends and themes contained in qualitative data.

STUDY QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS

1. *What were the needs of the 21 projects under study?*

To answer this question, the study analyzed the demands that their participation in the Title I/NDN dissemination strategy placed on the projects and examined the documentation of technical assistance transactions to determine the areas within which help was sought and provided.

Several factors related to the Title I/NDN dissemination strategy were identified that translated into demands confronting the projects. Those demands required that the projects...

- prepare for participation in nationwide outreach in an extremely short time
- be able to define for potential adopters what adoption involves
- be able to understand and explain the operation of the NDN
- be prepared to interact with potential adopters who had had no state facilitator contact
- understand issues of legality related to state and Federal Title I guidelines

- get to know many individuals from different federal and state agencies involved in dissemination
- adjust to hectic travel and time demands
- participate in regular NDN activities in addition to Title I dissemination
- incorporate PIP materials into dissemination effort (PIP projects only)
- cope with apparently conflicting requirements concerning what to disseminate and how

The study identified five categories or areas within which the projects experienced needs for assistance. These were:

- needs for orientation
- needs for moral and logistical support
- needs for help related to specific dissemination tasks
- needs for help with management tasks and concerns
- needs for information and assistance relating to others in dissemination

2. *What technical assistance services were provided to meet the projects' needs?*

The study looked both at the modes of service provided by the Support System and the content addressed in technical assistance transactions. Service was provided in eight different forms to the Title I D/D projects. Five forms or modes were individually administered (e.g. on-site visits, telephone consultations, etc.) and three forms were group-administered (e.g. workshops, group mailings of resources, etc.) During the period October, 1977 to November, 1978 a total of 130 individually-administered technical assistance transactions occurred; 48 group-administered technical assistance transactions were completed during that same period.

An examination of the content of all individually-administered technical assistance services during October, 1977-May, 1978 revealed 813 discrete content transactions in fifteen areas related to the five

need areas described above. The majority of these transactions focused on needs related to creating awareness, securing adoptions, providing training, developing relationships with others in dissemination, sorting out logistics and addressing orientation concerns.

3. *What characteristics of the projects appear related to variations in the provision of technical assitance?*

To explore this question the study examined variations in the amount, type, and content of technical assistance provided to the projects by grouping them along seven comparative dimensions: project type, the experience of the project's dissemination coordinator, the time commitment of the dissemination coordinator, the source of dissemination funding, the amount of dissemination funding, the duration of the project's experience in national dissemination, and the project's distance from The NETWORK. The study also examined a number of qualitative characteristics which, in the opinion of the technical assistance appeared to influence the quality and the amount of technical assistant provided to some clients.

With regard to variations in technical assistance related to the comparative dimensions explored, the study found projects that used the most technical assistance and the greatest number of different modes of assistance were...

- those who were newest to the job
- those whose projects had had the least NDN exposure
- those who received clear messages from the funding agency that they were expected to use technical assistance
- those who had a bigger or more complex set of dissemination tasks than some others
- those who entered the NDN with a Title I sub-network identity

With regard to the use of different types of assistance, it appears that...

- migrant projects, projects with veteran coordinators and projects with low or no funding tended to use more on-site assistance than others

- PIP-2 projects, migrant projects, and projects with novice dissemination coordinators tended to use more telephone consultation than other
- migrant projects and projects with veteran dissemination coordinators did not participate in workshops as much as other projects

Other findings about patterns in amount and type of assistance used were that...

- time commitment and funding level do not appear to influence the amount of assistance used. However, funding level may influence the use of some modes of assistance that require project expenditures.

- Distance from the technical assistance agency as measured by the time zone appears to interact with the experience of the dissemination coordinator: novice coordinators outside The NETWORK time zone received as much (or more) assistance as novice coordinators within The NETWORK time zone; veteran coordinators outside The NETWORK time zone received less assistance than veteran coordinators closer to The NETWORK

With regard to variations in the content of technical assistance provided, the study found that...

- Inexperienced dissemination coordinators received more help in all eight need areas examined than did veteran disseminators.
- Both novices and veterans received help in all eight need areas explored and both groups shared the same top two priorities: creating awareness and management related tasks.

- Novice coordinators show an extremely high level of concern related to securing adoptions as evidenced by the fact that projects in that group received an average of 9.33 technical assistance transactions related to securing adoptions as compared with 1.67 for veterans.

- The more recently a project has entered national dissemination and the lower the funding level, the greater the liklihood that the project will require assistance related to management of dissemination activity.

Among the qualitative characteristics examined, three were judged to be of significance with regard to variations in technical assistance provided;

- the extent to which the project recognizes problems as amendable to solution through technical assistance
- the extent to which the project is receptive to being helped
- the extent to which the project is willing or able to emerge in problem clarification before seeking specific forms of assistance

4. *What other factors appear to have influenced the delivery and use of technical assistance?*

Seven contextual or environmental factors were judged to have been important influences on the delivery and use of technical assistance:

- the Title I/DND dissemination strategy provided a structural framework for the technical assistance effort which facilitated the delivery of technical assistance
- the responsiveness of USOE personnel to collaborating with the technical assistance agency in addressing problems with issues of concern to the projects aided the delivery of technical assistance
- the point in the client project life cycle when the technical assistance was made available influenced the extent to which the long-term technical assistance planning occurred
- the limited duration of the Support System contract and the relatively low level of funding limited the extent to which the needs of more capable projects were addressed
- the availability of technical assistance sources other than the Title I Support System influenced the extent to which some projects used Support System services
- the changing focus of the projects' concern as the adoption cycle progressed from awareness to training to implementation influenced the focus of the assistance provided
- the general condition of *organizational health* in the district housing the D/D project influences the project's need for and receptivity to technical assistance

5. *According to the 21 D/D projects, what was the utility and what were the effects of the technical assistance they received from the Title I Support System?*

Overall the projects rated the assistance they received from the Support System as being useful. Of the twenty areas of assistance they were asked to assess, projects rated the following five as having been most useful:

Assistance related to..training adopters
moral support and encouragement
logistical support
developing awareness materials
documenting awareness activities

Most projects also reported an increase in understanding and ability related to dissemination. The five areas within which the most improvement was reported were:

understanding the dissemination process
securing adoptions
determining adoption criteria
developing materials
training adopters

In addition to the Support System, projects cited other D/D projects, USOE personnel, other technical assistance contractors, and their own experience as having been sources of help and influence during the course of the period examined.

CONCLUSIONS

Developer-demonstrator projects need...

- knowledge and skill in dissemination strategies
- a high level of motivation and a positive *dissemination attitude*

- support for national dissemination from administrative personnel in their district
- specific, structured opportunities for orientation and integration into the National Diffusion Network, especially when they are new
- a reasonable amount of time to plan and prepare for national dissemination before actually engaging in outreach activities
- information and assistance to insure that they realistically anticipate and plan for the time and energy that national dissemination requires
- an opportunity to think through and define what it is they are offering for adoption and what their adoption procedures will be before engaging in full-scale dissemination
- information and *straight answers* concerning policies, regulations, and political realities that may affect their dissemination efforts
- to plan their dissemination activities over a longer period than a year at a time
- access to technical assistance and support especially when they are new

Conclusions concerning technical assistance

- Technical assistance should not be limited to addressing purely task-related needs.
- Technical assistance can be provided in many different forms.
- It is important for the technical assistance staff to have knowledge of the requirements for the client group as those requirements relate to the context within which the clients must function.
- It is important for the technical assistance staff to develop relationships with the clients they are trying to serve.
- The attitude of the technical assistance staff toward the clients they serve is important.
- It is important for the technical assistance staff to have a collaborative relationship with program personnel in the funding agency

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USOE

- USOE should continue to provide Develop-Demonstrator projects with access to knowledge, skills and opportunities to learn from one another through technical assistance directed to improving dissemination practice
- USOE should provide orientation to the NDN for administrators from districts holding D/D contracts
- USOE should encourage D/Ds to involve district administrators from their home sites in NDN conferences where appropriate
- USOE should provide periodic recognition to the school districts which house D/D projects for their efforts on behalf of the nation's children
- New projects in the NDN should be assured easy access to a consistent source of information and answers to questions as they arise
- USOE should provide projects with a planning and start-up period during their initial funding (for a period of 3 months to a year)
- USOE should consider requiring that projects assign a full-time person to dissemination activities and should provide ample funding to allow that level of effort
- USOE should consider making technical assistance available to projects <u>after</u> they have been JDRP approved, but <u>before</u> they are funded for dissemination to help them anticipate and begin planning for national dissemination. At minimum USOE should consider providing print materials to validated projects describing the need to plan for national dissemination prior to funding
- USOE should examine the potential for conflicting state and Federal program regulations that may interfere with the dissemination of projects across state lines before similar strategies to the Title I dissemination are undertaken in the future
- USOE should consider re-structuring the RFP for D/D projects to reflect the fact that projects have different short-term and long-term objectives at different points in the D/D life cycle, and to more specifically structure the development of the D/D operation over time.
- USOE should consider the capability of agencies to offer a broad range of technical resources and support structures when seeking to identify technical assistance providers
- USOE should insure that projects have access to mechanisms that facilitate their communicating with and supporting one another.